Sermon Series: The Gospel of John

Good Wine and Great Glory

John 2:1-12 (ESV)

1 On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2 Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. 3 When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." 4 And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

6 Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. 7 Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. 8 And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it. 9 When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom 10 and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now." 11 This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

12 After this he went down to Capernaum, with his mother and his brothers and his disciples, and they stayed there for a few days.

Introduction: The Unfolding Glory of Jesus

Why is this story included in the Bible? This passage of Scripture is about the glory of Jesus. John included this event in his gospel because through it Jesus revealed his glory. No other gospel writer tells this story. John is the only one. The purpose of this account is to reveal the glory of Jesus. The glory of Jesus unfolds through three conversations; the first conversation is between Jesus and Mary (vs. 3-5), the second is between Jesus and the servants (vs. 6-8), and the third conversation is between the maitre'd and the groom (vs. 9-10).



Setting the Scene

John 2:1-2 (ESV)

1 On the third day there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2 Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples.

Once again John points out the location. This makes sense if you were an eyewitness to these events and you were retelling them to your friends. The scene is a **wedding in Cana in Galilee**.

Cana is located the west of the Sea of Galilee about half way to the Mediterranean Sea. It lies about nine miles north of Jesus' hometown of Nazareth. Cana is also the hometown of Nathanael (Jn 21:2), a fact that is the literary link between the encounter with Nathanael (1:43-51), which we saw last week, and the wedding.

On the Third Day

John noted for us where this took place, Cana, and he also tells us when this took place—on the third day. This phrase at first might seem a bit confusing, but it seems the easiest way to understand this is that the wedding took place on the third day following the last event narrated, which was Jesus' meeting with Nathanael. Jews were inclusive in counting days so the day Jesus met Nathanael would have been counted as the first day, and then two days later came the wedding. The day of the wedding, then completes the first full week of Jesus' public ministry.

The *first day* was the day the delegation from Jerusalem came to John (vs.19-28). The *second day* was the day John publicly identified Jesus as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (vs.29-34). The *third day* (vs.35-39) was the day that two of John's disciples left him and begin following Jesus and then ended up spending the rest of that day with Jesus since they arrived at his lodgings at 4:00 p.m. The *fourth day* (vs.41-42) was the day Andrew found his brother Peter and introduced him to Jesus. The *fifth day* (vs.43-51) Jesus called Philip and was introduction to Nathanael.

The next day mentioned is the day of the wedding (2:1), which would be the sixth day mentioned. But John says the wedding took place (as Jews count) on the third day after Jesus met Nathanael. Or as we would count, excluding the day on which Jesus met Nathanael, the wedding fell two days later. That leaves one day, the day before the wedding, unmentioned. It is a "silent" day, so to speak. There are two possible explanations. The unmentioned day a day of traveling to the wedding or perhaps it was the Sabbath. Either way, this accounts for a full seven days.

Does the Sequence of Days Really Matter?

Why is this noteworthy? Why pay attention to all the sequence of days? The answer is, we should pay attention to the sequencing of days because John does. This is the only places in the gospel that John pays such close attention to a week-long sequence of days. And John's purpose is to give his readers reasons to believe in Jesus so that they may have life. We do not want to miss anything about Jesus that John may be communicating.

So the fact that he here (1:19 - 2:1) mentions a full week of days catches my attention. Given what he wrote in the prologue (1:1-18), it begs the questions, are we to see in this an echo of the creation week? Are the events of these seven days some how related to first seven days of creation?

The Beginning

In the prologue, John has already drawn our attention to the beginning of creation in the very first words of this gospel (1:1). The language is virtually identical with Genesis 1:1. John tells us that Jesus was there at the beginning. In 2:11 John says that turning of the water into wine was the "first" of Jesus' "signs." The Greek word translated "first" in 2:11 is archen ($\alpha p \gamma n$). It is the exact same word John used in 1:1 which was translated "beginning." So we could translate 2:11 as saying, "This was the beginning of Jesus' signs."

¹ James Montgomery Boice notes that Jewish law proscribed Wednesday as the day of a wedding for a virgin, thus working backward he arrives at the third day, the day that John's two disciples spent with Jesus, as the Sabbath. James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of John: The Coming of the Light (John 1-4)*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 163.

² Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2004), 99.

Light & Darkness

Furthermore, in prologue John has spoken of light (1:5, 7) and darkness which are also spoken of in Genesis. We know John will later tell us that Jesus claimed to be the light of the world (Jn 8:12).

The Spirit of God

In the creation week we see the Spirit of God hovering of the face of the waters and in these verses (day 2 vs.29-34) John the Baptist tell us that when Jesus came up out of the waters of baptism the Spirit of God hovered over Jesus like a dove then descended and remained upon him.

Life & Flesh

In the creation week we see man created and given flesh and then the breath of life. Jesus also "become flesh," that is "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (1:14). Jesus also will later claim to be "life" (Jn 11:25).

Adam, Eve, & A Wedding

And then at the end of the creation week we see God bringing together a man and woman (i.e. Adam & Eve) as the very first marriage. And here, in Cana in Galilee, at the culmination of **this** week, we find Jesus performing his "first" sign at a wedding!

Are we to see nothing in these similarities? Or should we see something profoundly wonderful happening through the first days of Jesus' ministry? Were these kinds of things in Paul's mind when he wrote that Jesus was the second Adam? (1 Cor 15:22, 45). Or when he penned these words,

2 Corinthians 5:17 (ESV)

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

All that is herein recorded has been recorded so that we might see the glory of Jesus. Something incredible is happening in these first seven days of Jesus' ministry. And oh may we not miss it! May the Lord be pleased to allow us to see the unfolding glory of Jesus.

1) The Conversation Between Jesus & Mary (v.3-5)

John 2:3-5 (ESV)

3 When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." 4 And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come." 5 His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you."

Jesus has been invited to a wedding (2:2) and along with him, his disciples. At this point, there are only five—Andrew, Peter, Philip, Nathanael, and the unnamed disciple (which is most likely John?). Mary, the mother of Jesus, was also invited (2:1). John chooses not to name her, but simply refers to her as "the mother of Jesus," probably because he wants Jesus to remain the focal point.

It is very possible that the bride and/or the groom or both were either relatives or close family friends, since Mary appears to have some sense of authority. We see this first, in her seeking to resolve the situation with the wine and second, by the fact that she commands the servants (v.5).

Weddings today are major events, lasting all day, attended by a hundred to two hundred people, and costing thousands of dollars. The Massachusetts Online Wedding Guide states that the average Massachusetts wedding costs between \$25,000 - \$30,000.³



A Jewish wedding celebration was much larger, very elaborate in it's symbolism and could last as long as a week.⁴ "In a village like Cana it would be a community celebration." Running out of wine before the end of the wedding festivities amounted to, what one commentator said, was a "social catastrophe" and another referred to as "a dreadful embarrassment."

It was the responsibility of the groom (see v. 9) to provide the food and drink for the entire feast and so to run out of wine would have been devastating in a culture where shame was so significant. This would have devastating to the reputation of the

groom. On the cusp of a promise to provide for his new bride for the rest of their lives, it would have been utterly shameful to have it revealed that he was unable to adequately provide for his quests for only a few days! This might have been such a faux pas that would have forever after marked the new couple in the minds of the townspeople as "the stingy couple" or poor planners or some other such unhappy comment. Such wedding happenings have the ability to live long in the minds of the attendees and often become the fodder for jesting both for good and ill.

They Have No Wine (v.3)

Mary became aware of the problem with empty wine jars and sought a solution. She may have had some kind of role of responsibility in the logistics of the wedding. She went to Jesus with her problem. Her words were few. She simply said, "*They have no wine*."

Mary did not go to Joseph. She went to Jesus for help. Most likely Joseph already died by this time. The last mention of Joseph was when Jesus was in the temple at age twelve (Lk 2:41-52). Jesus, probably, had taken over his father's trade (Mt. 13:55; Mk 6:3), presumably after his death, and become the primary bread-winner since he was the eldest son. It would then be natural for Mary to turn to Jesus for help.

This is an example of one of those statements which carry far greater meaning than the words themselves would seem to indicate. Was Mary simply giving Jesus information? Was she simply saying, "Don't bother going to the kitchen, because they have no wine." No. She is not simply educating Jesus. This statement contains an implicit expectation of action.

³ Source http://www.maweddingquide.com/planning/costs/costs.htm accessed 5 November 2011.

⁴ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Inter-Varsity Press; W.B. Eerdmans, 1991), 169.

⁵ Frank E. Gaebelein, Merrill C. Tenney and Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 9: John and Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 42.

⁶ Colin G. Kruse, *John: The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, Vol. 4, Gen. ed. Leon Morris. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 91.

⁷ Ibid.

Husbands will immediately recognize this kind of statement. We have heard similar statements. You've heard things like, "Honey, I noticed that the grass is really tall." Or "The snow is really getting deep on the side walk." Or "Honey, I know it's midnight, but we're out of milk." In each of those informative statements is hidden a thinly veiled request for action.

Did Mary Expect A Miracle?

Mary is telling Jesus this because she wants him to do something. The question is what did she expect him to do? Did she expect him to perform a miracle? The answer must be no because up to this point Jesus had never before performed a miracle. John clearly states that this was the "first sign." The miracle Jesus was about to perform was the *first* miracle. So we can safely assume that Mary was not expecting a miracle.

However, Mary had a large treasury of amazing statements and events that had surrounded the birth and life of her son. Remember it was through an angel and not a pregnancy test that she discovered she was pregnant. No doubt she remembered every word that the mighty angel Gabriel had spoken to her about Jesus (Lk 1:26-37). No doubt she remembered all that the shepherds had reported to her that the angels had said about Jesus (Lk 2:17). No doubt she remembered the words that Simeon had spoken over Jesus when he was presented at the temple (Lk 2:22-25). She knew it had been spoken of him that he was "the Lord's Christ" (Lk 2:26). Mary heard many things spoken about her little Jesus and she treasured and pondered all these things in her heart (Lk 2:19, 51).

And no doubt she had been told what had happened at Jesus' baptism and how God had spoken about him from heaven (Mt 3:17; Mk 1:11; Lk 3:22). Or perhaps she was even there when it happened. And no doubt she had been told what John the Baptist had said about him or maybe even heard it with her own ears. No doubt she remembered all these things and here he was at the wedding with five new friends calling her baby boy, "Rabbi." Things were changing. Jesus was no longer a full-time carpenter.

So maybe the time for Jesus to make himself known was at hand. And maybe what Jesus needed was a little motherly encouragement to get the Messianic ball rolling. And maybe it would make him look really good in the eyes of all the people at this wedding if he and his disciple-boys could do a wonderfully good deed and take care of this wine problem. So perhaps along with this informative statement, "They have no wine," there was a wink and a nod from mom that was not lost on Jesus. His shocking response seems to indicate that something like this did indeed happen.

Woman...

John 2:4 (ESV)

4 And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come."

Jesus refers to his mother as "Woman." To us, this may sound cold and disrespectful however this is not necessarily the case. Jesus used the same word to refer to Mary just before he died on the cross and as he was seeking to provide for her after his death (Jn 19:26-27). He said to her, "Woman, behold your son!" In that moment, he is caring for her and loving her. So this does not have to be disrespectful. Jesus used the same word when he spoke to the woman at the well (Jn 4:21). He used the same word when he spoke to the woman caught in adultery (Jn 8:10). Probably the closest term we might have is 'ma'am.' This is a courteous term, but it's not a terribly warm and

endearing term. The NIV translates the word 'Dear woman,' but this is probably too soft. The very least we can say is that the word "establishes a polite distance."

What Does This Have To Do With Me?

The phrase translated "what does this have to do with me," is ti emoi kai soi, literally is 'what to me and to you?' "The expression, common in semitic idiom (e.g. Jdg. 11:12; 2 Sa. 16:10), always distances the two parties," and "at the very least is a measured rebuke." Clearly, Jesus did not like what he was hearing from his mother. This is a polite rebuke. This phrase only appears five the New Testament and every time it is spoken by demons to Jesus. It means, "You are treading on ground that is not yours. Your presence here is not wanted. You don't belong here. We have nothing in common, so back off."

Jesus is *not* comfortable with what his mother is asking him. Yet, as we keep reading, we know answers her request. In just a moment, he will take care of the wine problem. So why is he pushing her back? There is a reason for this.

My Hour Is Not Yet Come

Jesus also says, "My hour has not yet come" (v.4). When Jesus refers to his "hour"¹¹ (six other times in John) it always refers to his crucifixion and death and the surrounding events. The next two times "my hour" (Jn 7:30 & 8:20) it is mentioned it speaks of Jesus' power and sovereignty. Both instances indicate that some desired to arrest him, but no one touched him because "his hour had not yet come."

The meaning is clear—no one controls the events of Jesus' life except him. No one touches Jesus until he allows himself to be touched. No one will kill Jesus until he decides to allow himself to be killed (Jn 10:17-18). No one manipulates Jesus into revealing who he truly is (that he is Messiah) unless it is on his timetable—not even his own mother. Jesus obeyed the will of His heavenly Father, before he ever obeyed the will of this earthly mother.

John 5:19 (ESV)

19 So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise.

John 5:30: (ESV)

30 "I can do nothing on my own. As I hear, I judge, and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me."

John 8:28-29 (ESV)

28 "... I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me." 29 "... I always do the things that are pleasing to him."

⁸ Köstenberger, 94.

⁹ Carson, 170.

¹⁰ Mt 8:29; Mk 1:24; 5:7; Lk 4:34; 8:28.

¹¹ Jn 7:30; 8:20; 12:23, 27; 13:1; 17:1.

Jesus is radically obedient to his heavenly Father. The power of the Messiah cannot be manipulated. No one has an inside track with Jesus to getting requests taken care of, not even his family. The power of the Messiah is not set in motion because of family relationships but because of a relationship of faith. Jesus pushed back on Mary and politely rebuked her wrong thinking. However, because she trusted in him, he went ahead and answered her request.

Mary had faith in Jesus. She trusted him completely. It is obvious that she trusts him completely because she commanded the servants, "Do whatever he tells you" (v.5). Do whatever he tells you. That statement is a statement of total and complete trust. It's is almost as if she is saying, "If he tells you to do something you think is strange, do it anyway because I have learned to trust him and in the end it will turn out well." Do whatever he tells you.

2) The Conversation Between Jesus & the Servants (v.6-8)

John 2:6-8 (ESV)

6 Now there were six stone water jars there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. 7 Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. 8 And he said to them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the feast." So they took it.



Water jars similar to what would have been used have been found in excavations in and around Jerusalem. This one dates to the first century and is housed in The Israel Museum in Jerusalem. These large jars are about two and half to three feet tall. If the six each held 20 gallons, then together that would be a total of 120 gallons. If they held 30 gallons, then that raises the total to 180 gallons.

These jars held water that was used for ritual purification, **not** for drinking. The rites of purification probably included the washing of the hands and feet of those who traveled to the wedding and or the utensils used during the feast. You'll remember that pious Jews will not eat unless they first could wash their hands (Mk 7:3-4; cf. Mt 15:2).

What is astonishing about this is that Jesus did not request the empty wine jars? If he was going to provide more wine, why not fill the empty wine jars? And why on earth choose vessels that were **not** intended for drinking. These jars contained water for ceremonial washing, not for drinking. This is like having a bucket of water at the door and everyone who came in dipped their hands in and washed their hands. Nobody wants to drink out of that! This is not drinkable water. What is he doing?

These jars are at least partially empty because Jesus tells the servants to "Fill the jars with water." The servants obey and fill the jars completely to the brim. These servant obey exactly as Jesus commanded. Then he tells them to, "draw some out and take it to the master of the feast."

This is probably about the time that the servant's heads start to swim. They probably thought, "Jesus, are you nuts? You want me to take this dirty water to master of the feast and invite him to take a sip? Are you trying to get me killed? They need wine not dishwater!" And how is this

¹² Source: http://www.civilization.ca/cmc/exhibitions/civil/israel/isrel591e.shtml accessed 5 November 2011.

supposed to solve the wine problem? It is a good thing Mary said what she did ("Do whatever he tells you."), because any sensible servant would turn to the next servant walking by and say, "Hey, take this to the maitre'd!" And **yet they obey**.

They draw out water from the jar and by the time the servant arrives at the master of the feast, the water had now become wine. Jesus has just created 120 to 180 gallons of wine. That's over "two thousand four-ounce glasses of wine." That's a lot of wine!

Wine in the Old Testament was a symbolic of God's blessing,¹⁴ joy, and celebration. One Jewish proverb said, "There is no rejoicing without wine." Most importantly as background for the context of this passage is the fact that the messianic age was prophesied to be one in which wine would flow in abundance.

Jeremiah 31:12 (ESV)

12 They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall be like a watered garden, and they shall languish no more.

Not necessary to read vs. 13 but it does convey celebration & joy

13 Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry.

I will turn their mourning into joy;

I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.

Joel 3:18 (ESV)

18 "And in that day the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the streambeds of Judah shall flow with water; and a fountain shall come forth from the house of the LORD and water the Valley of Shittim.

Amos 9:13-14 (ESV)

13 "Behold, the days are coming," declares the LORD, "when the plowman shall overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows the seed; the mountains shall drip sweet wine, and all the hills shall flow with it.

¹³ Frank E. Gaebelein, Merrill C. Tenney and Richard N. Longenecker, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 9: John and Acts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 42.

¹⁴ Psalm 104:14-15 lists wine among many of God's blessings (see also Joel 2:24) which "gladden the heart of man." The Bible is also full of warnings against the danger of "lingering long" over wine for those who do will find that in the end "it's bite is like a serpent and it stings like an adder" (Prov 23:29-32).

¹⁵ Köstenberger, 93.

14 I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.

When messiah will come, so will come the blessing of abundant wine.

3) The Conversation Between Maitre'd & the Groom (v.9-10)

John 2:9-10 (ESV)

9 When the master of the feast tasted the water now become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom **10** and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and when people have drunk freely, then the poor wine. But you have kept the good wine until now."

The maitre'd tasted the wine and it was very good. He did not know where the wine came from. He knew nothing of Jesus' involvement, but the servants did! The servants only are mentioned as knowing what truly happened. The maitre'd then assumes this has happened at the command of the bridegroom since the bridegroom had the responsibility for supplying the wedding feast. He commends the groom on his generosity.

Evidently the practice was to put out the good wine first. Then when everyone was drunk, which is what is meant by the word translated "drunk freely" (i.e. "to be drunk," Greek *methysk*ō¹⁷) then you can slip in the cheap wine because everyone will be too inebriated to notice the difference. The wine Jesus made was clearly very good wine. It was not grape juice. The wine that Jesus had made was better than the wine that had been served earlier. The maitre'd calls it "the good wine," meaning the best wine.

Jesus gets no credit for this, but the groom does and he is highly commended by the maitre'd. He had saved **the best** until last. He had kept the good wine until now. And no doubt the silent groom was absolutely stunned. He had no idea what was happening or who had been so kind as to save his neck. In one secret sign, he went from a place of utter embarrassment, deep shame, and looking like a cheap-skate, to being highly honored, deeply commended, and looking like a groom who was lavishly generous. This groom had truly be saved.

Conclusion

John 2:11 (ESV)

11 This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

This sign manifested the glory of Jesus, but not everyone knew about this. Apparently the only ones who were aware of this were the servants, Mary, and Jesus' five disciples. This was not a public miracle, it was a secret sign which pointed to the glory of Jesus. It was not time yet for the

¹⁶ Carson, 169.

¹⁷ *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Gerhard Friedrich, Vol. 4. electronic ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 545.

community at large to know who Jesus truly was, but a new age had come and the abundance of what Jesus could provide was staggering.

The first conversation, between Mary and Jesus, reveals the glory of a Savior who is worthy of complete trust. Jesus is the kind of glorious Savior who can put you in your place when your motives for making a request are wrong while at the same time still find a way of answering that request. He is a Savior who responds to a request made in faith from anyone and not just people who are physically related to him.

"Do whatever he tells you." This statement came from a woman who spent her entire life watching Jesus' every move. She listened to his every word and she is saying, "Jesus is gloriously trustworthy! Entrust the care of your soul into His hands. Do whatever he tells you and your life will be blessed."

The second conversation reveals the glory of a Savior who takes our anemic attempts at self-purification and transforms the unusable dirty-dishwater of our own righteousness into the very usable good wine of His own making. Jesus transforms our useless unholy lives into use-full holy lives. No one benefits from muddy water because you can't drink it. But good wine is beneficial and it is a blessing.

And faith is the vehicle of transformation. The old religious rituals of Jewish legalism were inadequate to bring about true spiritual cleansing and renewal. Faith exercised in obedience to the commands of Jesus is what truly cleanses the soul. Jesus says, "Come to Me and I will give you rest for your soul." There is a glorious Savior who will remove your sins if you will go to him in faith.

The third conversation reveals the glory of a Savior who will never fail to provide for his bride. This young groom had failed to provide all that was needed. However, Jesus will never fail to provide for his bride. He has provided a way to have our sins removed and then he wraps us up in a robe of righteousness.

Jesus has manifested his glory. Have you seen it? Do you delight in it? He is a glorious Savior.